

Genesis

What the Bible is All About

After the Tower of Babel, the world's population dispersed. Most people did not retain a knowledge of the One True God. Wickedness continued to flourish and God allowed nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). There were a few scattered people who were aware of God and genuinely loved him, but there was a real danger that, in a generation or so, knowledge of God would vanish from the earth. But, God can never fail, and he will always have a witness (Acts 14:17). Two thousand years have passed since God first created man and now he began to prepare a new nation, one which would be responsible for carrying God's revelation to other men and through whom the Redeemer could finally come into the world to work out God's plan of salvation. He chose a man named Abram, a descendant of Shem and a son of Terah.¹

Chapter 12 | The God of Glory Appears To Abraham (Abram)

-In chapter 12:1, Abram is living in Haran, located in Mesopotamia.

-How God appeared, the text (12:1) does not state. God appeared to Abram before he arrived in Haran, while he was still living in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2,3).

**12:1: Get thee out of thy country,
and from thy kindred,
and from thy father's house,
unto a land that I will shew thee.**

**12:2: I will make of thee a great nation,
and I will bless thee,
and make thy name great;
and thou shalt be a blessing;**

**12:3: I will bless them that bless thee,
and curse him that curseth thee:
and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**

¹ Morris, Henry M. The Genesis Record. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, MI. 1976

In Genesis 3:15 we saw the promise of one who would come from the seed of the woman to crush the serpent, now we have the first promise of someone who would come to bless all nations. We see that this is to be accomplished through Abram's own family.

12:4-9: Abram departs Haran (along with his nephew Lot). His wife Sarai goes with him. Abraham was Seventy-five years old (Sarai was ten years younger). It was a long journey with details added in Hebrews 11:8. The LORD appeared to him again to confirm his promise, and adding the specific promise of his seed inheriting the Land, **unto thy seed will I give this land**. It must have been an amazing promise since at that time, Abram owned none of the Land, and he had no child in whom he could pass on an inheritance (Acts 7:5). Yet, it appeared Abram believed God and **there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared to him**.

12:10-20: Chapter 12 ends in Abram's failure to trust God by leaving the Land God had promised and going to Egypt when a famine occurred.

Chapter 13 | Abraham and Lot

13:1-4: Upon his return to the promised land from Egypt, Abram again worshipped God (13:4).

13:5-7: Abram had prospered and was rich in cattle, silver and gold (13:2). Lot too had prospered and (vs. 7), **there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsman of Lot's cattle** over grazing rights.

13:8-13: An agreement is reached between them. Abram allows Lot to select his own land. Lot chose the **plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where**. This plain was where Sodom and Gomorrah were located. And indeed, Lot moved his family near Sodom, where the men were exceedingly wicked.

13:14-18: God again **said unto Abram...lift up thine eyes**. And as far as his eyes could see, north, south, east, and west, God assured him that he would give it to Abram (verses 15-18).

Chapter 14 | The Battle of the Kings | Melchizedek

14:1-16 | Abram, a Man of Courage

14:1-16: War breaks out on the plains. Several kings, including the king of Sodom fell into the hands of Chedorlaomer king of Elam and for twelve years they paid tribute to him. But in the thirteenth year they rebelled and would not pay any more. A year later Chedorlaomer swept into the valley defeated the local kings, raided Sodom where Lot was living and took him captive. An escapee made his way to Abram and told him what happened. Abram and his men took up arms (318 men, vs. 14), and pursued Chedorlaomer. He succeeded (vs. 16).

14:17-24: A man named Melchizedek briefly appears on the scene.

Melchizedek

1. The first priest mentioned in the Bible.
2. His name means King of Righteousness.
3. His title, King of Salem means also King of Peace (was Melchizedek king of Jerusalem? If so, how could this righteous man be king of a city that was most likely inhabited by a pagan Canaanite tribe, the Jebusites? How did he become a priest? He was a non-Levite priest since the priesthood of Aaron had not yet been established. Rather he was from a special priestly order, the order of Melchizedek, one that would last forever (see Psalm 110:4)).
4. Abram recognizes this priest as a worshipper of the same **most high God** who had spoken to him. Abram also recognized Melchizedek as being superior to him.
5. There are several possibilities as to who this man was. This survey doesn't allow us to examine them. A strong possibility, however, is that Melchizedek was either a "type" of Christ, or, he was actually Christ himself in a pre-incarnate appearance. Was this the Son of God?

For further study see, The Genesis Record, by Dr. Henry Morris (pages 317-321).

Genesis 15 | The Covenant Confirmed | Spiritual Seed Promised

15:1-6: The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision... The word **vision** meaning some form of supernatural state (not a dream). This is the first time the word "word" appears in the Bible. God's word is incomparable, Psalm 138:2. And Jesus is the sum of all things that are communicated, Revelation 1:8. The word of the Lord, and our ability to comprehend it is what sets us apart from all other creatures.

Notice the first words, **Fear not**. In fact, there are many firsts in this verse: **vision, shield, reward**, and of course **I am**. Many of the great claims of Jesus Christ began with the words **I am**. "I am the light of the world." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the door." Last of all, as we have seen He said: "I am the Alpha and Omega," and then "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:13, 16). In fact, His very name is "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14).²

Abram questions the promise since he is still childless (vs. 2). God assures him that he will have an heir from his own inward parts, in fact so many will come from Abram that, like the stars in the heavens, he will be unable to number them (vs. 5).

And Abram **believed God** (that he would have an heir) **and he counted it to him for righteousness**. Notice the verse does not say that Abram entered into salvation by grace through faith (as is often taught), rather that he believed

² ibid.

God would give him a son; he believed God's promise or covenant. On the basis of that, God **counted it to him for righteousness**. Again, this verse is not saying that Abraham was saved by grace through faith. He certainly had faith and God counted that faith as righteousness. Later, in Galatians 3:6, Paul points out that the basis of the Abrahamic covenant was *hearing and believing*. Likewise, the basis of salvation is *hearing and believing*. Yet, because they have the same basis does that mean they have the same meaning? The same basis does not make them the same.

15:7-21: God makes a one sided sign to Abram that he alone will keep his promise of the seed and the land (vs. 18).

Chapter 16 | Abraham's First Son

Genesis 16:1-16: We have recorded the birth of Ishmael. Here is one of the doubt passages regarding Abram where he takes matters into his own hands. Sarai was still unable to have children, Abram believed God's promise, so he rationalized how it would be accomplished. Instead of through his wife, because she was barren, Abram thought God must surely intend for me to produce offspring some other way. Therefore, he violated God's institute of marriage between one man and one woman and produces a child through his wife's maid, Hagar. The result was, after much mistreatment by Sarai, that Ishmael was born.

Chapter 17 | Almighty God | Covenant Confirmed | Promise of Isaac

Genesis 17:1-8: Thirteen years pass between chapter 16 and 17. Life is progressing for Abram, he is prospering, Ishmael is growing, the land is at peace, and Abram has certainly all but given up hope that Sarai would have a son—everything points to Ishmael being his heir. But then **the LORD appeared to Abram** and he renews his covenant that he will be the **father of many nations** and his named is changed to **Abraham** (meaning, father of many nations). God had not forgotten. In the previous four times God had come to Abraham (12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:5-21) he had used the word covenant only once, now he uses it thirteen times throughout chapter 17.

17:9-14: God now requires as visible sign and seal of his covenant relation with Abraham's seed. Not only will he have an heir, his seed in the Abrahamic line must be circumcised. Circumcision was commanded strictly as a sign of the covenant. Why circumcision?

The male sexual organ is the divine created vehicle for the transmission of this seed from one generation to another. The circumcision ("cutting around") of this channel would thus picture its complete enclosure within God's protective and productive will. How would it be a sign? It would only be a sign to the individual who was circumcised, his parents, and his wife. Dr. Henry Morris writes:

1. Parents: It would confirm that they had been faithful in transmitting the seed to the son with whom God had blessed their union, and that they were trying to follow God's will in training him.
2. Wife: It would give assurance that he indeed was a descendant of Abraham, to whom she could joyfully submit in the marriage relation, in faith that God would bless their home and their children.
3. Man: It would be a daily testimony that he and his family were consecrated to the God of Abraham and that they shared in his calling and ministry to the world.³

17: 15-27: God specifically spells out that the promise of the seed would come through Sarai, and Abraham **fell upon his face and laughed**. Why? Because he was a hundred years old!

Yet, God promises to bless Ishmael too, but his covenant would only be established with Abraham and Sarah's son: Isaac, who would soon be born.

Genesis 18 | The Appearance of the Lord | Promise | Intercession for Sodom

Genesis 18:1-8: Abraham receives another visit from God (his sixth). This time God appeared as a man and two friends traveling with him. We find the other two men are angels who will later be sent to Sodom and Gomorrah to bring God's judgment on those wicked cities. The other "man" with these two angels, who leads them, is identified by Moses in verse 1 as the LORD, that is, Yahweh Himself, this would be Christ in his preincarnate state (John 1:18).

18:9-15: Abraham, after preparing food for them was eager to know why they had come. The answer comes when they asked, **where is Sarah thy wife?** The announcement is made that Sarah will have a son, and like Abraham before her, when she overheard the statement that she would have a son, she laughed.

18:16-33: Another reason for the visit is revealed. That is the pending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, knowing his nephew Lot lives in the city, pleads for God's mercy to not destroy the city if ten righteous people be found there. God said, **I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.** There evidently were not even ten righteous people dwelling there. Perhaps Abraham thought all of Lot's family were righteous, but in reality they may have been part of the problem.

Chapter 19 | Sodom Destroyed

Genesis 19:1-3: The account now moves to the city of Sodom itself. **Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.** This may mean that he was some kind of city leader or business man—or, that he simply idled away his time by sitting in the gate of the

³ ibld.

city. The city was filled with wickedness (2 Peter 2:8). We don't know if Lot did anything to try and change the hearts and minds of the people in Sodom. But it is there he meet the two men who had previously been with Abraham and the LORD. Why Lot invites these strangers into his home is unstated. Was he concerned for their safety, knowing how wicked the city was?

Lot was righteous, but was he living as a "carnal" man? Is he a picture of us when we slip into carnality and fail to be the Ambassadors of Christ?

19:4-11: We see the complete depravity of man in these verses. It is not difficult to see our own city, wherever we may live, slipping into degenerate behavior.

19:12-23: Judgment is pronounced and Lot is instructed to get out with his family to escape with their lives. Lots wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. What this means has been debated over and over. We know from verse 26 that she was already behind him. How far it does not say. Did she linger in or near the city and get caught up in the cosmic air-blast that took place? Was she lingering because she didn't believe her husband? Did she have other family members in Sodom she was reluctant to leave behind? Or, did she return and go back?

19:24-38: Lot and the rest who escaped with him made it to Zoar, located southeast of Sodom and the depravity of Lot and his daughters is seen.

Chapter 20 | Carnal Abraham

20:1-18: The narrative shifts back to Abraham and we see again, amazingly, his failure to trust God. This is a difficult chapter to understand. Some have said it is the most difficult in the Bible. How could Abraham and Sarah repeat the very same sin they had committed many years ago in Egypt? And yet, it is recorded in God's perfect Word, so we must believe it happened.